

BULLETIN

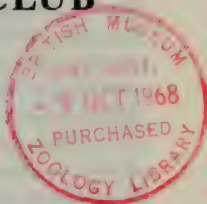
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The six hundred and fifty-second meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, on the 17th September, 1968.

Chairman: Dr. J. F. Monk

Members present: 16; Guests 2.

Mrs. B. P. Hall spoke on her recent holiday in Alaska and gave an account of the birds seen in the McKinley Park, Fairbanks, Nome and Anchorage together with a description of an auklet colony on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Straits.

More of the plumages, moults and breeding seasons of southern African starlings

by R. K. BROOKE

Received 5th April, 1968

Brooke (1967 a, b) has shown that the glossy starlings *Lamprolornis mevesii* (Wahlberg) and *australis* (Smith) have their full moult immediately before instead of immediately after breeding, a pattern of moult otherwise only known among passerine birds in *Carduelis spinoides* Vigors in the Himalayas. Through the courtesy of their authorities I have recently been able to examine some of the starlings in the collections of the National Museum, Bulawayo and the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria. The Transvaal Museum proves to have 41 specimens of *L. australis*. A study of these does not require me to modify the remarks on the species' moults in Brooke (1967 b): however three specimens are worthy of particular note; one is a breeding record and two show partial albinism. There is a newly fledged female juvenile taken by O. P. M. Prozesky on 30th April 1959, 76 miles from Kuruman on the van Zylsrust road, and this makes the fourth March breeding record. The short tail already shows the graduation in the length of the rectrices which will be more apparent when fully grown. The general appearance is one of dull green iridescence with a black abdomen, i.e. very similar to a juvenile *L. nitens* save for the graduated tail and lack of notching in the primary wing feathers. There is virtually no suggestion of the purple iridescence that will appear after the post juvenal moult and which finds its full development in the adult bird.

On 12th and 14th June 1911 two males were collected at Okahandja, South West Africa, showing partial, asymmetrical albinism. The first specimen has two white feathers in the crown above the left eye, one at

the right rear corner of the crown, a circlet of white interspersed with normal feathers from the mantle down the right side of the neck and across the breast but not on the left side of the neck, a few on the left front of the abdomen, a few on the central part of right flank and, one in front of the vent. The second specimen has a group of some seven white feathers on the right side of the abdomen. Together with the partial albino described in Brooke (1967 b) three have been found in a series of 70 specimens, an extremely high rate for an Ethiopian species. The only published case of partial albinism in *Lamprotornis* of which I am aware is that in *L. chalybaeus* described by Benson (1962). There is a male *L. chalybaeus* in advanced moult in the National Museum, Bulawayo, collected on the Lundi River, Rhodesia, on 30th April, 1962 which has one white feather on the throat just right of centre. This poverty of records is significant since these starlings are freely collected because of the great difficulty of visual (field) identification and I have certainly seen a thousand specimens including the one described by Benson (*op. cit.*).

Benson, Brooke and Vernon (1964) have shown that in Rhodesia, Zambia and Malawi starlings breed from August to March with October and November as the principal egg laying months. The only exceptions have been discussed in Brooke (*op. cit.*). The vegetative and climatic systems of adjacent territories are similar and the breeding seasons of starlings can reasonably be supposed to be the same. The following starlings undergo the normal complete post nuptial moult:—

<i>Creatophora cinerea</i> (Menschen)	Wattled Starling
<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i> (Wagler)	Amethyst Starling
<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i> (L.)	Red-shouldered Starling
<i>L. acuticaudus</i> (Bocage)	Sharp-tailed Starling
<i>L. chalybaeus</i> Hemprich and Ehrenberg	Greater Blue-eared Starling
<i>L. chloropterus</i> Swainson	Lesser Blue-eared Starling
<i>Neocichla gutturalis</i> (Bocage)	White-winged Starling
<i>Onychognathus morio</i> (L.)	African Red-winged Starling
<i>L. splendidus</i> (Vieillot) the Splendid Starling which is a breeding migrant to Zambia from August to November judging by material examined, arrives in very fresh plumage. The moults of this species should be studied in a collection in which all months of the year are represented as the possibility exists that it either has two complete moults a year or has a complete moult immediately before migrating to breed.	

Little is known of the breeding of *Onychognathus nabouroup* (Daudin) the Pale-winged Starling. What there is is in Layard and Sharpe (1875), Sharpe (1904) and Hoesch and Niethammer (1940) and since none of these accounts is readily available I now quote them. Layard and Sharpe (1875) say "eggs sent by Mr. H. Jackson are a light verditer speckled throughout with minute brown specks. Axis 1" 4"; diam. 9". They nest in holes of banks and inaccessible precipices." Sharpe (1904) says "The nest was made of dried grass and was built in a crack in the rocks or under sloping stones. We (*i.e.* Grant and Seimund) never found the eggs but got one nest with three young birds." Hoesch and Niethammer (1940) say "Gregarious, even in the breeding season (during the rains). Nests in cracks in overhanging rocks, never in holes in trees. On 27th April 1934 a nest was found in an artificial site being 25 cm. down the hollow of a steel pylon. On a thin layer of plant material and grass lay two newly hatched

youngsters and beside them fragments of egg shell pale greenish blue in ground with small red-brown spots. Beside the nest a pair of Rosy-faced Lovebirds *Agapornis roseicollis* (Vieillot) were breeding." McLachlan and Liversidge (1957) add that the clutch is three to four eggs and that one clutch measures 33.5 x 22.2, 32.2 x 22.5, 32.2 x 22.0 mm. Five nests (including a replacement clutch) have been reported to the PFIAO nest record scheme: 4th January 1957 C/4 a heap of straw with a cup in the middle on a rafter in a farm shed in the Jansenville district of the Cape Province. The parents threw the eggs out of the nest shortly before hatching apparently as a response to too much human activity in the area (J. Blignaut). 11th March 1962 young in a nest on a kranz (precipice) in the Mountain Zebra Park, Cradock District C.P. (C. J. Skead). 17th September 1965 young in a nest on a kranz by the Vosburg road, Carnarvon District C.P. (J. Martin). V. L. Pringle took C/5 on 6th December 1947 from a nest of green grass in a hole in a creeper clad kranz at Huntly Glen, Bedford District C.P. A few days later on 18th December he found that a replacement C/5 had been laid. Concerning these clutches and their authors, the Pale-winged Starlings, he writes:—

"I have known these birds to nest in at least three sites on my farm, in all instances in a cliff face. One nest is in a shallow hole in the face about eight feet up, the second is on a small ledge in a crevice in a cliff about 30 feet up the face, and the third was in a fall of loose stones and shale held up by a clump of bushes. In all instances the nest is constructed of fine rootlets and grass lined with fine grass and horse hair very closely packed.

Clutch No. 1

Taken from the fall of stones on 6/12/1947. The bird was on the nest and incubation had just commenced. All the eggs in this clutch are more elongated than in the second clutch. The eggs are a very pale grey-green colour, and marked with pale red-brown dots and smudges these being very small and some barely visible. There are five eggs in the clutch, measuring

32.0 x 20.8, 30.8 x 21.3, 30.7 x 21.6,
30.1 x 21.2, 29.4 x 21.5

The second clutch, also of five, was taken from a nest built in the same place on the 18/12/1957. Incubation had started. The eggs of this clutch are slightly less marked than the first and are slightly paler in colour. The eggs measure

31.0 x 21.9, 30.9 x 21.6, 30.4 x 22.0,
29.8 x 21.7, 29.2 x 21.3

These birds were regular breeders on the farm for years but I have not seen them for the past few years and am wondering if they have left the area for good or if they will return this year after the exceptional rains we have had and the very mild winter."

Egg laying takes place, therefore, from August to March in *O. nabouroup*: the clutch is two to five eggs which measure 29.2–33.5 x 20.8–22.5 and average (13) 30.9 x 21.7 mm. Macdonald (1957) notes that all specimens collected in South West Africa between 24th December 1949 and 10th April 1950 were about half way through their complete moult. The Transvaal Museum has a female specimen from Springbok, Northern Cape Province, in a similar state of moult collected on 6th September 1962. In

addition that collection has specimens from Klaver, C.P.; the male taken on 4th October 1917 has the wings and tail in full moult and the unsexed bird taken the next day shows no moult at all. It appears that in *O. nabouroup* breeding and the complete moult occur simultaneously. This may be an adaptation to take advantage of the short periods in their arid habitat when feeding is very easy but more evidence than is at present available is needed to prove it.

In this connection I have received a letter from Mr. E. Joubert, a biologist employed by the South African Parks Board and working in the Kaokoveld in north-western South West Africa. He points out that *O. nabouroup* normally occurs between the 100 and 300 mm. isohyets. In the Kaokoveld most rain (what little there is) falls between January and March but that there is a spring flush of vegetation in September independent of rainfall. During the dry weather insects are scarce and berries are non-existent. The September flush of vegetation makes little difference to this situation but during the rains both are abundant. Joubert also points out that a post nuptial moult in April to August besides taking place during a time of increasing scarcity of food would occur during the period when minimum night temperatures range between 30° and 38° F. Since other birds moult successfully at very low temperatures when food is abundant I would suppose that the short period of abundant food is the reason for the tendency for moult and breeding in *O. nabouroup* to coincide.

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What is *Serinus 'flavigula'*?

by A. L. RAND

Received 20th May, 1968

In preparing the section on African canaries for the forthcoming volume of Peters' *Check-list*, it became necessary to decide on the status of the three names proposed for certain little known canaries from Abyssinia which more or less resemble one or the other of the local forms of *S. atrogularis* except for having a yellow throat patch. These are:

(a) *Serinus flavigula* Salvadori, 1888, *Ann. Mus. Genova*, 26, p. 272.—Ambokarra, Shoa. (Three specimens in all, the others from Malcaghebdu and Aigaber). Described as without white on top or sides of head, and with